

The Sin of Adultery

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There is no doubt in my mind that the most serious problem facing the Church of Jesus Christ in the world today is that of moral impurity. I could perhaps think of a number of reasons why I consider it to be the foremost concern but two stand out at the moment.

The first is that in the theology of creation, of life as we know it and of man in the image of God, the man-woman relationship and the fidelity of men and women in marriage is the most graphic, living testimony of the relationship between man and God and Christ and the Church. This is not just an emotional or sentimental conclusion on my part, picked out of the hat to dramatize the subject of the moment. It is in fact a firm biblical declaration. In Ephesians 5:22-32, St. Paul says:

Eph. 5:22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.

Eph. 5:23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.

Eph. 5:24 Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.

Eph. 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

Eph. 5:26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

Eph. 5:27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

Eph. 5:28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.

Eph. 5:29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:

Eph. 5:30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.

Eph. 5:31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.

Eph. 5:32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

Here it is clear that the marriage relationship is more than a reflection of the union between Christ and the Church; it is a living testimony and as revealing a demonstration as can be made in this world of what is in store for the Bride when She meets Her Husband

in the day of consummation at the return of Christ. The philosophy of marriage is founded upon the theology of Christ and the Church.

Nor is this a unique passage of Scripture that can be discounted as being inconclusive for its lack of biblical support. Nine times in the Old Testament God refers to His people as His bride. Five of those scriptures, Is a. 49:18; Isaiah 61:10; Isaiah 62:5; Jeremiah 33:11 and Joel 2:16; are messianic and prophetically speak of Christ and the Church. Of the 396 times that the word 'wife' is found in the Old Testament, there are three widely noted passages that make prophetic reference to Christ and the Church. The most recognized of these are found in the 54th chapter of Isaiah.

In the New Testament Jesus refers to Himself as the Groom and identifies the Church as the bride when He says, in John 3:29:

John 3:29 He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.

He continues this imagery in Matthew 9:15, when He said to the Jews who were criticizing Him because His disciples did not keep Moses' law fast: **"Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast."**

St. Paul continues his use of this analogy when he tells the Church, in II Cor. 11:2: **“For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.”**

The present relationship between Christ and the Church in the spiritual realm is symbolized by St. John in the Revelation when He passes along the information of the mighty angel: Rev. 19:7: **“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.”**

Again St. John is told, concerning the Church, in Revelation 21:9 **“And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife.”**

But the biblical connection between the moral purity of the marriage and the individual with the spiritual purity of the Church goes beyond the metaphorical stage. In I Cor. 6:15-16, the Apostle asks those who would resort to harlots for their fulfillment: **“Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh.”** In this passage, the physical defilement of the body by joining it intimately to a harlot is a defilement of the temple of the Holy Ghost through sexual impurity.

In the shallow words and formulas of neo-evangelicalism the professing Church has developed an open contempt for sexual purity and other mandates of holy behavior. This has come by way of a literalistic and legalistic definition of the love of God. It is common to hear this kind of phrasing: "We do not too much care what people do. Our mission is to save souls. God accepts you just as you are. He loves you no matter what you are or what you are doing." This sort of linguistic distortion of the gospel by those who are morally, mentally, ethically, spiritually and sexually impure is a mockery of the gospel. It turns the serious mandates for giving up on the old world completely when coming to Christ in repentance into a silly little initiation ritual into some sort of religious club where anything you want to do is justified in the name of the love and grace of God. Recently I read what I considered to be the ultimate expression of this sort of bastardizing of the gospel. It was contained in a letter to the editor of one of the news papers of the general area. This was a young man who was very angry at what he called old fashioned and self-righteous bigots who were always trying to change people to make them conform to their own ideas. He cited among other things the words of the popular so-called invitation hymn, "just as I am." He went on to say that God accepted people, because of His grace, in the state that they were in and made no effort to conform them to a standard or a life style they did not want. He signed his letter, a "born again, practicing homosexual."

This is admittedly an extreme case, but the question must be asked, how did we get here? What has happened to the message of

the Church that makes it possible for this kind of ultimate sinner to believe that he can come to Christ and be saved while openly and proudly expressing his perversion with no thought of repentance and conversion? No doubt many answers could be given by many different people, but the one that stands out at the moment is that this sort of contempt for morality and sexual normality and purity has descended on the Church by way of the decline in moral behavior in Christian marriages and in many cases by those who brazenly continue to follow the form of religious leadership as if there was nothing in their lives to keep them from being an effective witness for Christ and a leader of men.

If we were not careful and determined we could get so far afield in this sort of discussion that we could never get back to the point of departure. I do not say that this sort of broad-based examination of this subject would be bad, if in fact it was carried out by those who were seeking to restore moral sanity to the Church and who were willing to point out, condemn and discipline moral dereliction rather than excuse it. But it would not be expedient for us to do so here for we are in fact attempting to stay somewhat connected to the seventh commandment and deal specifically with the subject of adultery.

The most classic case of adultery, obviously, is when a married person, man or woman, cheats on his or her spouse. Of course this is not considered cheating or even a bad thing necessarily by the sociologist and the so-called, and falsely so-called Christian psychologist. It would be easier to make a case for a Christian

prostitute than for a Christian psychologist. At least prostitution is a perversion of something that, in the right context is good, holy and sanctified. Psychology emanates from the demented and demonic rantings of Freud that originated in the mind of the devil and incubated in hell itself. Who cares what these impostors think. I am personally impatient to the point of intolerance with this ruthless wreckers of homes and lives. If you have no better sense than to turn to self-help programs, twelve-step programs, and the religious soap box opera of call in shows on Christian radio for counsel, help and direction with these kinds of problems, then so far as I am concerned, you deserve what you get. If you have a problem in these areas of life, go to someone who can help you and that will be your elders or your minister. You may say that your minister cannot help you. I expect that you are wrong about that and that he can help you if help is in fact what you want, but if he cannot, then go to one that can.

The Bible describes any extraneous sexual activity by a married person as a capital crime against God, against the home and against the camp of the saints. The basic unite of the Church is the home and the foundation of the home is the marriage. The home only works when there is respect, honor and faithfulness. You may try to claim that you cannot honor your husband, live and cherish your wife, or be faithful and find emotional fulfillment in your marriage. This reveals one simple and basic fact. You are a liar and until you learn to be honest first with yourself and then with others, there is no help for you. If you think that any sane and mature person is going to believe you when you say that this other person, whom you could not live

without before you were married, and could scarcely wait for your marriage to take up house keeping with is now so unattractive and repulsive to you that your only hope lies in breaking you vows to God and man and going out an breaking up someone else's marriage in order to get your own spoiled and self-serving way, then you have a low and unsanctified opinion of the intelligence and judgment of godly men. You are going to get emotional and refuse to do what is right because you know that these are the days when you can get away with it. If this was fifty five years ago when I was a child and when if a husband caught another man with his wife and shot him, the sheriff would not even go out and question him, and if he shot her too, no one felt sorry for her, then you would find that it would not be so difficult for you to think in terms of working out your problems.

But all of that is superfluous to the real issues for the Church and that is of course who we are addressing our remarks to. What he unregenerate world chooses to do with their lives makes no difference to me. And the reality is this. It is still as wrong today as it ever was to commit adultery; it is still as much a sin against God, your spouse and your children; and this, and be sure not to miss it $\frac{3}{4}$ it still brings the same judgment of God in you life and upon those that you hypocritically claim to love. Now, it is true that we co not stone people of the Church today for this sort of ungodly behavior. It would be a blessing to that person if we did and it would be a definite favor to the wounded husband or wife who could then get on with their lives. But if you do not know that sin still brings death, then you had best think again.

There are sins unto death and sins not unto death, the Bible tells us and for sins unto death, God does not want us to pray. What does this mean? Well, like most of the teachings for the Bible, it is simple if you keep it in context. The passage is saying and I am going to paraphrase now so you will have to do some searching on your own if you wish to know the truth of the matter, that we should pray for our Christian brothers and sisters in sins not unto death so that these sins do not build up on them and result in defeat in their Christian life. Do not all sins bring defeat? If you believe that, you must be the most self-righteous hypocrite of them all. If we could no grown and move forward in the faith without living sinless and perfect lives, then all of us would be crushed in he mire of defeat and it there that we would stay the rest of our lives. You, as a Christian, can grow in the faith and moved ahead, even though you may be haughty, stuck on your self, prone to exaggeration, to much of a one to want the attention, quick tempered and so on. These characteristics must be noted and taken into consideration when we pick out those who will be leaders over God's people, but the fact is that the ordinary member of he body of Christ just alike a little child in the home, can grow and mature in spite of his failures and shortcomings. That is in fact how he gains the strength and maturity to overcome these things in time. And so if you have a relationship with a Christian person who has some of these personalities flaws, the biblical counsel is to pray to God that the does not let these shortcomings defeat this person and cast him into a negative direction in His walk with God. This is instead of doing what most Christians do, which is to tell someone about it and to express disappointment in that person and thus assure that his

failures will defeat him. If you will pray for him, God makes a every unusual promise to you. God promises to give you life for that person, because you prayed and asked for it.

But this will not work with sins unto death. Sins unto death are sins that will inevitably bring about defeat, failure and the judgment of God. If you know a man who is committing adultery, he is someone you live, and you go to God and ask God not to let this sin defeat this persona and for God to give you life for him God's reaction is: Don't even ask. I can't do that and you know it. I cannot and will not allow that sort of sin to go unpunished or to allow that person to go on in his Christian life as if nothing has happened. This would include grand theft, murder, subversion and the like. Not only included in this list, but perhaps at the top of it is adultery. The adulterer has betrayed the spouse, the home, the Church and the faith ion he most basic of ways. This is the place where Christian character is the most critical. It is aloud to the place where the most damage is done to the cause when failure occurs. It exposes this person as a selfish, cruel, inconsiderate, undependable, dishonest, undisciplined, traitor to the cause. This is how this person is to be regarded by the faithful Christian and how he not only will be but is regarded by the faithful Christian. You may say that you are a faithful Christian and you do not feel that way toward Christina people who are adulterers and adulteresses. You are not only spiritually defeated but personally deceived. You need a good dictionary so you can look up the meaning of the word faithful. And if you think you are being loving and helpful to that person, look up the word ignorant while you are at it. St. Paul

had words for your type of person when he encountered immorality in the Corinthian Church and found a situation where people were saying, we are supposed to love people and not be judgmental. Against this mindless, meaningless and spiritually bankrupt blather, the Apostle said this:

I Cor. 5:1 It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife.

I Cor. 5:2 And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.

I Cor. 5:3 For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed,

I Cor. 5:4 In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,

I Cor. 5:5 To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

I Cor. 5:6 Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?

The duty of the Church is clear. Draw the line on these people and draw it clearly. If they will not repent, put them out of the Church

and do it at your next meeting. Do not worry about whether or not you are doing the right thing. The Spirit of God is with you in his, the Apostle says. If you are worrying about what sort of hurt this will bring on this person, don't. He has made his own bed, let him lay in it. We have to worry about the purity of the Church and the example that this is setting for our wives and children. This tells us that the moral irresponsibility and the epidemic instances of misbehavior in the Church today are brought on not only by the perpetrator, but by the addle-headed and indulgent attitudes of those who should avoid him like the plague.